

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

...in when subjected to the action of the sun and wind, and is used as a pack-
...last or as pack-
...has spread with great rapidity
...summer pasture grass through-
...Louisiana, the southern half of
...It extends northward along the coast
...growing luxuriantly during the summer
...at frost. The roots, however, survive the
...again in the spring. The short season of
...makes it of little value as a pasture grass,
...seed. In the Southwest, through western Texas,
...California, Bermuda grass is found only along irri-
...ed fields, where it often becomes a dangerous foe to
...overflowed land, surviving even when covered for a
...each soil with plenty of moisture, two or three cuttings
...year. The hay is relished by stock, and in feeding value
...dry and redtop. On poor soil or when too heavily sodded

...grass in the South no other plant has been found which will fur-
...large a quantity of forage during the hot summer months. Mixed with
...over it provides a perennial green pasture, and once planted is good for an
...finite period. Bermuda grass is improved by trampling and close cropping,
...such treatment prevents the growth of weeds, which would shade and thus
...jure it. It seems, therefore, well adapted for sheep pasture.

Throughout the Gulf States it is one of the most common lawn grasses, and its
ability to grow during the very hottest weather has given it precedence of nearly
every other grass in the States where there are no severe frosts. The chief objection
to its use for this purpose in any locality where Kentucky bluegrass can be grown
is that it begins growth very late in the spring and turns brown with the first
frost in the autumn. This characteristic is an effectual barrier to its use as a
lawn grass in all States north of the southern boundary of Tennessee.

In laying a Bermuda grass lawn in the South, either with seed or by the use
of sod, it is suggested that 20 pounds per acre of Italian rye-grass seed be sown
at the same time. This seed, germinating quickly, will occupy the ground and
give the lawn a pleasing appearance while the Bermuda is throwing out its run-
ners. Later the Italian rye-grass will be crowded out entirely by the Bermuda
grass.

The range of soil conditions is wide. Although Bermuda grass seems best
adapted to loose, loamy soils it will grow on a rather stiff clay. It is reputed
to be the best sand-binding grass for the South and may be used on hillsides and
in gullies to prevent washing. Planted in a gully it catches the silt, and as the
bottom of the gully rises from this deposit the grass rises with it.

Culture.—Bermuda grass is generally propagated by cuttings of the rootstocks
owing to the present scarcity and high price of the seed. These rootstocks may
be chopped up in an ensilage cutter and sown broadcast on well-prepared
ground, covering with a disk or a common harrow. In some instances the sod
itself is used. When an old field is plowed up the sod can be torn into shreds
and used in starting a new field by throwing pieces into the furrow after the
plow and covering completely. With warmth and moisture it will come up in a
short time and cover the ground with runners. If sod can be had for plowing,
this method will cost \$3 to \$6 per acre. Seed costs 45 to 60 cents per pound and
should be sown at the rate of 3 to 5 pounds per acre on soil which has been
especially prepared and well firmed, since the seeds are very small. Cover with
a roller. The best time to sow in the extreme South is February or early March,
farther north, March and April.

Bermuda grass has not been used very extensively in mixtures because there
are few grasses that can exist in a Bermuda grass sod. Bur clover and Bermuda
grass have been found successful in situations where the conditions favor the
clover. Both Kentucky and Texas bluegrass have been tried with success in
combination with Bermuda grass in different localities, but the plant most gen-
erally found in combination with Bermuda grass in the South is Japan clover,
or Lespedeza. It is aggressive enough to succeed in competition with the Ber-
muda, and seeding a small amount of it with the grass improves the quality of
hay and also the pasture.

Pastures must be grazed closely to keep the grass tender and free from weeds,
and meadows should be mown three to five times during the season for the
same purpose. Cut when 10 to 15 inches high it cures quickly, and if mown in
the morning can often be put into cocks the same day.

Its aggressiveness makes it a nuisance in some localities, but it has come to
be regarded as a pest chiefly because of the one-crop system of farming. Under
a sensible rotation system it should not prove at all dangerous in localities where
it does not produce seed. Bermuda grass may be eradicated by breaking the
sod shallow in December and following with a crop that produces dense shade,
such as cowpeas or velvet beans.

Seed.—All the seed at present on the market comes from Australia, and its
price is high. Bermuda grass seeds perfectly in Arizona and southern Califor-
nia, and seed raising in that region would doubtless be profitable.

H. N. VINALL,
Scientific Assistant in Agrostology.

LIBRARY
RECEIVED
★ MAR 15 1954
★
U. S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE